HARRISON GRAY DYAR.

In Memoriam.

AN ADDRESS BY

REV. CHARLES S. HARROWER,

AT THE OBSEQUIES OF

HARRISON GRAY DYAR,

IN RHINEBECK, N. Y.

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ADDRESS.

It is both melancholy and instructive to reflect how few years suffice to make the youngest, bravest and most active of us "strangers upon the earth." Six years since our neighborhood welcomed to this well-known house a man we did not know, but whom to-day, with profound respect, we bear from his gate for the last time.

I say we did not know him: he was a stranger to us all, and such he probably remained so far as most were concerned until the end.

The distinguished physician, his predecessor, we had known for more than twenty years. His skill and fame were always a matter of pride with us. But we did not once suspect that a man of equal energy, equally unusual intellectual daring, and

given to similar recondite experiment and research, was going in and out over the same threshold. Who dreamed that at twelve years of age our new neighbor had performed many of the most important experiments in chemical science, and mastered most of its known principles? No one could have guessed that when under thirty years of age, he, an American, was offered the Professorship of Chemistry in a Paris University; that he had been connected with characteristic movements of the generation; that important discoveries and inventions had been indebted to his genius. Yet all this is true. Let me try and make you a little better acquainted with our friend to-day, even if in so doing I must speak candidly of some things of which he would have been the last to allow remark at such a time. I think the world has a right, but surely we who have latterly met with him, and shall keep his name among us, we have a right to gather up a handful of memories and plant them on his grave.

It was in 1826 or 1827, when he was but twenty-one years of age, that Mr. DYAR'S studies in electricity culminated in carrying a wire around a certain race-course on Long Island, New York, and the transmission of messages thereby. This was

the first piece of Electric Telegraph erected on this continent. Many experiments were made about this time by ingenious men in Europe and America, but in a most important item of detail, Mr. DYAR surpassed all his peers. It occurred to him that wires could be stretched from city to city, and correspondence maintained, if an alphabet were devised. Accordingly he set himself to work, and finally perfected that system of dots, marks and spaces, which is now known as the "Morse Alphabet." It ought to have been called the "Dyar Alphabet." Vast improvements were in store for this new agency in the world, the Electric Telegraph; but until Prof. Henry discovered how to intensify a current of Electro-Magnetism by using bars of soft iron, or rather say until Prof. Morse adopted the discovery in 1836, i.e., for ten years, I have no doubt Mr. DYAR was the pioneer of all the world in telegraphic experiment. Surely we are gathered about the coffin of one of the foremost men in his generation.

The success of the experiment on Long Island was so satisfactory, that Mr. DYAR and his associates felt justified in undertaking to carry a line from New York to Philadelphia. For this, arrangements

were far advanced when they were strangely interrupted.

It would be a long story to tell of the desperate selfishness of the man whom they employed to assist in raising funds; how he tried to become possessed of stock in the enterprise; how failing in one scheme, he determined to drive Mr. DYAR into some arrangement by giving him trouble of the strangest but unfortunately most aggravating sort. It was about the time of the bank conspiracy trials, and this unscrupulous man obtained a writ against his employers under a charge of "conspiracy for carrying secret information from city to city." Mr. Charles Walker, the brother-in-law of Mr. S. F. B. Morse, was Mr. DYAR'S counsel, as well as intimate friend.

After having absented himself from New York for a few months, Mr. DYAR returned, and consulted with Mr. Walker, who thought that however groundless such a charge might be, it might give his client infinite trouble to stand suit. Accordingly the enterprise was then and there abandoned; so that just at the moment when a great victory was about to be achieved by a foremost experimenter and inventor, the wicked greed of a trusted subor-

dinate postponed for years its accomplishment, and almost entirely deprived our friend of his true meed of fame. So far as known Mr. DYAR made no further discoveries in telegraphy. When, moreover, seventeen years after his success on Long Island, and fifteen years after his proposed line to Philadelphia, Mr. DYAR heard that the brother-in-law of his friend and counselor had persuaded Congress to build the line between Washington and Baltimore, and had adopted the system of marks, dots and spaces himself had invented, he did not once ask to have his alphabet accredited to him, but praised Mr. Morse in the sincerest terms for his energy, perseverance and success, and accounted him fully entitled to his fame as one of the world's benefactors.

His attitude in this connection was characteristic, and surely it was very noble. But facts warrant me in saying, and it is the merest justice to remind you that had it not been for the bank conspiracy excitement, the first public line of telegraph would have been erected seventeen years earlier than it was, and not by the Congressional influence of Mr. Morse, but by the private enterprise of Mr. DYAR.

In the year 1831 Mr. DYAR went abroad, and for nearly thirty years his residence was principally in Paris and London. Much of his energy during the earlier part of this period was devoted to scientific experiments, and to kindred studies. Unfortunately, numerous papers, showing his connection with practical arts, have been destroyed, and no one quite knows how varied were his investigations, or how many successful results attended them.

Frequently he placed his discoveries wholly at the service of others; satisfied as, year by year, an ample fortune accumulated in his own hands.

It is a pleasant fact that some of the colors most worn by ladies and children during the past generation were originally produced by him. Indeed, he never could have been from his house an hour during the last twenty-five years, but he saw in dress or scarf some beauty of his own combining.

Mr. DYAR'S studies, however, took a wider range than practical experiments. He was surrounded in Europe by noble museums, galleries of art and of antiquities, and rich libraries. His capacity for patient and sustained investigation had been cultivated by long and close application. He therefore shrank from no line of inquiry which interested

him, however difficult or abstract. Through the agitation of 1848, as well as before and after, he was a deeply interested observer of political affairs; and seems to have thought and read profoundly upon the problems of society and government. Indeed, his temper must always have been earnest, his spirit fearless, and his habits of inquiry thorough. Whatever the subject, he never left what he entered upon until he believed he had mastered it to his fullest ability. Then he arranged his results, and passed on to another problem or topic. While Count de Gasparin was investigating the phenomena of Spiritualism, Mr. Dyar was doing the same with his characteristic determination. He satisfied himself as to what there was, and what there was not, of fact or truth in the peculiar phenomena of which he was cognizant, and then intelligently turned to other subjects.

Metaphysical studies, however, were his chief delight. Fourteen hours a day he could easily devote in the days of his health to his favorite authors; and until the infirmities of the last two years he spent hours of every day in reading what to many cultivated men are the driest and heaviest discussions of philosophy.

Of course such a man could not fail to encounter the serious and vital questions which relate to the Soul, to Immortality, and to God. Of these sublime themes, he spoke as the thoughtful man speaks, but he had long set the highest value upon the "perfectionment" of personal character, as he termed it. I wish to quote from one of his letters to an old friend after a separation of twenty years. This letter was called out by the earnest appeal of his friend that he would state his claims as an inventor in connection with the telegraph. Mr. DYAR tells the story, but refuses to say anything that might deprive Mr. Morse of his well-earned patents and profits. Then, in a familiar manner, he tells his friend what have been and are the ruling motives and aims of his life.

"But few events in life turn out as we plan them; yet I have found that *by striving after something excellent*, although we may not achieve that for which we aimed, yet, nevertheless, *we almost always get something good*, either incidentally, by such strife, or along the wayside leading to our such fancied ends. I constantly reproach myself for the little that I have attempted and for the less which I have accomplished; yet I flatter myself that if I live

to the probable old age due to my constitution, I may yet accomplish something to give me the consoling reflection upon the bed of death, that I have not lived for nothing, either in reference to society or my own personal moral perfectionment. * * * I have hardly any perceptible desire for wealth or popularity, or ambition in any shape; yet I believe I am one of the most happy of men—happy in living not for, but within myself; driven by a providence or by a destiny leading where I know not, feeling as if I had not yet got into my right place in the world, or as if I belonged nowhere in that world. Twenty years, friend Bell, and where shall we be, and how situated, if alive? This consideration is consoling, for in twenty years we shall then not be decidedly old men; and in that time many unconjectured acts of ours, or circumstances, may bring us together to attempt to accomplish. * * * Pray make known to me your project, thus thrown off into the distant future of twenty years. I hope for that distant future, but by no means dread a shorter future."

"Receive from me, my old and tried friend, the assurances of unalterable affection."

My friends, we may fitly take suggestions from

the words of the reserved and thoughtful man, written more than twenty-five years ago. It was the excellent in achievement and in character to which he aspired, ever encouraged by the certainty that if he missed the particular excellence proposed, he yet should win some prize by the way—some experience, some skill, or power of endurance, or insight into truth, some eminence from which to catch a wider prospect, or some quality with which to correct a baser tendency, or mix a nobler purpose.

During an acquaintance of about six years, I remember now with pleasure, a pleasure qualified only by the indistinctness with which portions are recalled, many conversations or incidental remarks which show to me how deeply this serious estimate of life had been coloring his habits of mind.

One day I had found him engaged upon Sir Wm. Hamilton's and Mr. Lewes' writings, and as I sat down, laid upon his desk a couple of volumes he had loaned me, and placed in his hand a scientific treatise just issued. We turned the leaves over together, and fell to talking about science, spiritualism, the soul, and God.

"It is incredible," said he, "that the universe which so answers to intelligence, should have come

from any source less than an intelligent author. Intelligent and moral he must be; but what there may be, more and above these qualities, some mind beside man's, must be left to discover or to understand." "I strongly doubt," he said, at another time, "whether mind is in its nature perishable, whether any mind will ever cease to be; but what various destinies the separate, individual mind is capable of entering upon, this state only affords slight hints, and we must wait till by-and-by to learn more fully. I have seen great reason to believe that death neither ends nor changes the essential man."

"Is it not the first dictate of reason," he once asked, "that the Creator recognize and provide for each creature according to its rank? A seed must be a seed to him; a mountain, a mountain; a dog, a dog; and a man, a man. If the soul is organized for an indefinite destiny; if it is greater than a planet or a solar system, He must know it, for He caused it. Can it be possible that He has made no greater provision for it than that which we find here? Surely not!"

One day I found him lying on his sofa, and being in haste, rose after a moment, to go, when he

said: "You will come again soon, even if I am not much to talk with now."

"You're a great deal to some of us," I said, "and to One beside—and that is Christ." "Almost too far to make Him hear, don't you think?" he said. "Well, what do you think?" I asked again. "I know better than that," he replied, "He is near enough to hear, and to touch me." "Yes," I said, "and He will cure all this one day." "I shall not doubt that," was his answer, "but you'll come, too?" And I left him with dim eyes, both of us.

My friends, I have said enough to accomplish my purpose: that was simply to make you a little better acquainted with a man of marked qualities and eminent abilities, and one who did great service to the world.

Now, too, you will understand me when I say that from this scene I look backward with sorrow, and forward with hope. When I remember how strong was his nature, how earnest his spirit of investigation, and how silent, yet how hungry his inmost self, I am grieved to recall the hard, dark Calvinism in which his childhood was cradled and his youth nourished; but thank God that his instincts rebelled, and that his reason fought its way into juster beliefs,

though it must needs be through murky doubts and abysmal unbeliefs. Over against that retrospective sadness, however, is set the hope that softens the future. What blessing death must bring to the soul which has advanced through blows and blunders, sins and sorrows, freaks and failures, hopes, toils, ideals, studies, retreats, disciplines and successes,—winning on its way from wide experience, beautiful Providences, and diligent investigations—a faith and hope which, like wings, seem strong enough to bear it swift to the celestial gates!

Neighbors and friends, let us, too, aim at excellence; let us so bear ourselves that at death we may have the consoling thought that we have not lived in vain. Let us cultivate generous sentiments; let us hate falsehoods and crimes; let us cherish friendships; let us believe in God, reach out our hands to Christ, and then invite the future, like just men, fearlessly, humbly and hopefully.

And may God grant to our friend *peace*, and to us also, when the battle ends. Amen.